



88065659

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

Bureau of Land Management

Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918

September 1991

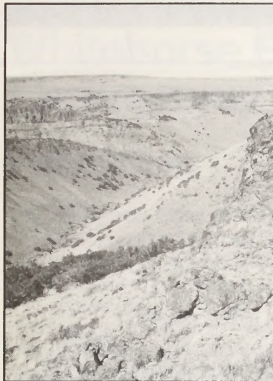


Vale District Planning Update for the Jordan Resource Area



As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

BLM-OR-ES-91-31-1792



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
 Vale District Office
 100 Oregon Street
 Vale, Oregon 97918

Vale District Planning Update

for the Jordan Resource Area

September 1991

Introduction

The Vale District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), along with three other eastern Oregon BLM districts, is launching a program of enhanced public notification and involvement with this mailer. It is part of an effort to keep you better informed and involved, and should help you understand land management proposals and decisions involving the BLM. This process should also facilitate BLM's decisionmaking through its ongoing land use planning and implementation.

This report in general summarizes progress toward implementation of the Southern Malheur Management Framework Plan (MFP). Previous progress reports/rangeland program summaries (RPS) were issued in December 1986 and January 1991. Besides presenting accomplishments in the Jordan Resource Area during Fiscal Year 1990 (10/1/89 to 9/30/90), this document presents actions anticipated for completion during FY 1991 (10/90 through 9/91).

This summary is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of all activities completed, but rather a brief status report.

What To Expect In This Document

Mailers like this one will be developed annually. While a flexible format will be maintained for the mailer, major sections similar to those described below will be included in each edition.

Feature Report: Reports in this section highlight topics of concern or high public interest within the Jordan Resource Area. This may include major accomplishments completed the previous year or upcoming events. Featured in this edition is a report on intensive coordination effort undertaken from 1987 to 1990 by BLM and other persons/groups interested in the management of the natural resources of the Trout Creek Mountains.

Summary of Work: This section identifies accomplishments of the resource area in FY 1990, and also the FY 1991 emphasis areas by each major resource program. The purpose of this section is to describe the work completed the previous year and list those areas of focus for the upcoming year.

Environmental Assessment Register: Listed in this section are those environmental assessments (EAs) which may be completed in FY 1991 or future years. This

section is included to improve public participation in the process used to analyze potential impacts of actions on the ground. Future mailers issued earlier in the fiscal year should allow more opportunity for public involvement in the environmental assessment process.

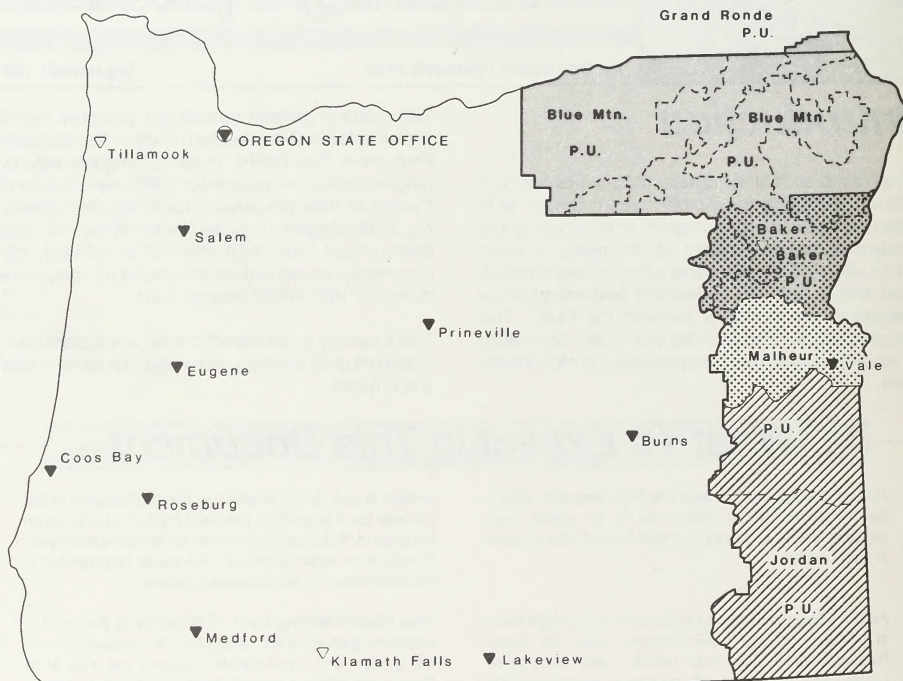
Vale District Mailing List: This section is essential to maintaining an accurate mailing list of interested individuals, groups and organizations because the Vale BLM District addresses a complexity of issues in its management which necessitate public involvement in the decisionmaking process. Another purpose of this section is to facilitate you in notifying BLM of those issues/topics which interest you.

This mailer should bring you up-to-date concerning implementation of BLM's land use plans. Any comments regarding format or content of the mailer to improve future issues would be appreciated and should be sent to the Bureau of Land Management, Jordan Resource Area Manager, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, OR 97918.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management

VALE DISTRICT

Figure 1
General Location Map



● BLM State Office

▼ BLM District Office

▽ BLM Area Office

— District Boundary

--- Planning Unit Boundary

— Environmental Impact
Statement Boundary

■ Baker RMP/EIS Area

▤ Ironsides Grazing Management
EIS Area

▨ Southern Malheur Grazing
Management EIS Area

Whitehorse Butte Allotment - *Controversy to Compromise*

Introduction

The Whitehorse Butte grazing allotment contains 127,000 acres in southeastern Oregon within the Jordan Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Vale District. Topography is rugged with elevations ranging from 4,000 feet near the Whitehorse Ranch to 8,000 feet in the Trout Creek Mountains. Willow Creek and Whitehorse Creek with its major tributaries (Fifteenmile, Little Whitehorse, and Doolittle Creeks) originate in the higher elevations and flow north through steep narrow canyons.

The area is semi-arid with cool, moist winters and hot, dry summers. Average annual precipitation ranges from 8 to 12 inches with approximately half occurring as snow from November to February.

The Whitehorse Butte Allotment is the subject of this report which summarizes the allotment's history and the intensive coordination efforts of BLM and other persons interested in management of natural resources of the Trout Creek Mountains.

Starting the Road to Recovery

In June 1970, BLM and the Oregon State Game Commission joined Whitehorse Ranch on a two-day horse-back inspection of Big Whitehorse, Fifteenmile, and Cottonwood creeks. They found deep gullies with active cutting, little shade from riparian vegetation, and excessively warm water temperatures. These degraded riparian conditions prompted the BLM to develop the first Habitat Management Plan (HMP) in March 1973, for the Whitehorse and Willow Creek watersheds.

Even before completion of the 1973 HMP, several actions were taken to improve riparian habitat conditions. Approximately 20,000 willow shoots were planted on 16 miles of Fifteenmile, Cottonwood, and Big Whitehorse Creeks. Forty-nine "trash catcher dams" were constructed to improve the stream pool/riffle ratio.

Other improvement projects included fencing and seedings. Rim and gap fencing projects were completed to protect approximately 8 miles of stream; three large crested wheatgrass seedings affecting 13,300 acres were undertaken to develop additional livestock forage to relieve grazing pressure on Willow and Whitehorse Creeks as well as adjacent native range-

land. In 1986, several enclosures were constructed protecting an additional three miles of Willow Creek.

On-the-ground improvement of the Whitehorse Butte area during the late 1970s slowed as the BLM entered a major land use planning effort. The land use planning process concluded in January 1984 with the issuance of the Southern Malheur Rangeland Program Summary (RPS). This document identified BLM's grazing decisions relating to four million acres of public land in the Vale BLM District including the Whitehorse Butte Allotment.

Controversy

As efforts were begun to implement the 1984 land use plan, BLM recognized the degree of controversy over the Whitehorse Butte Allotment. Moreover, the BLM realized something more paramount—the importance of involving interest groups or interested "publics" in its decisionmaking process in order for the ultimate decision on how to manage the area to be accepted or, at a minimum, understood. BLM conducted nine two-day tours of the Whitehorse Butte area from 1987 to 1989. The primary objectives of each tour were to allow: (1) each participant to develop an understanding of the resource values, land use conflicts and conditions existing on the ground; (2) an opportunity for interchange of information/philosophies; and (3) an opportunity for input into the development of a long-term grazing management strategy for the Whitehorse Butte Allotment.

Trout Creek Mountains Working Group

Formation of the "Trout Creek Mountains Working Group" was one of the most important events leading to the eventual acceptance of the final management decision involving the Whitehorse Butte Allotment. This working group grew to include representatives from the Whitehorse Ranch, Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Oregon Environmental Council, Doc and Connie Hatfield (ranchers), local livestock permittees, Oregon Trout, Public Lands Restoration Task Force (Izaak Walton League), Oregon Watershed Improvement Coalition, and BLM. The group's focus was to seek improved management of the many resource values in the Trout Creek Mountains, using a consensus-building process. The group was firmly fixed upon the conviction that success for this critical area depended upon inclusion of both a healthy trout habitat (watershed) and a viable

livestock grazing program. Each member of the group, optimistic that a majority of the resource conflicts could be resolved, volunteered their time and energies to assist in improvement of the area.

This working group was involved in numerous meetings and on-the-ground tours enabling interchange of information, values, perspectives, organizational positions, personal feelings, and ideas. Members worked to understand the views of others and to openly discuss the objectives of other group members, who had in some cases in the past been considered an "adversary." Evolution of such a dynamic working group was not an easy process. In its infancy, the group consisted simply of a number of individuals having the interest of the natural resources of the Trout Creek Mountains in common. They evolved into an effective working group reaching decisions through consensus, open dialogue and free exchange of opinion, observation, and scientific research. The group had no charter nor exclusive membership. Each member, at different times, expressed satisfaction, anger, frustration, mistrust, relief, understanding, commitment, and, most importantly, ownership in not only the group process, but the final decision as well.

The BLM and the working group continued development of livestock grazing alternatives (strategies) under the environmental analysis process as directed by the National Environmental Policy Act. Although BLM maintained the final decisionmaking authority, each member of the Trout Creek Mountains Working Group contributed to the strategy and rationale behind the *District Manager's Final Decision* issued on July 10, 1990.

DISTRICT MANAGER'S FINAL DECISION

The District Manager's Final Decision culminated four years of intense coordination and cooperation. The decision represents an attempt to bring livestock grazing into balance with other resource values while at the same time recognizing BLM's mandate to manage the public lands under the multiple use and sustained yield concepts. Outlined in the decision is a four-year deferred/rest rotation grazing system, associated range improvements, and adjustments in livestock grazing preference. The decision also commits BLM to developing an Allotment Management Plan (AMP) for the Whitehorse Butte Allotment.

Changes in the historical grazing use actually began prior to the July 1990 final decision. One action which set the stage for recovery of the natural resources and

the July 1990 decision was the "three-year rest agreement" between the Whitehorse Ranch and BLM in January 1989. Under the terms of the 1989 agreement, the Whitehorse Ranch agreed to rest approximately 50,000 acres of the Whitehorse Butte Allotment for three years to allow improvement of watershed and riparian conditions, while BLM agreed to develop an AMP for the allotment.

Conflict between livestock use and a healthy riparian system is not unresolvable as maintained by George Wuerthner in "Whitehorse Butte Allotment - Poor Public Range Policy" (December 1990, *Rangelands*). Development of a livestock grazing system with the primary objective of meeting the physiological requirements of the vegetation is the key to solving the conflict. It was this very principle that served as the driving force behind the BLM's July 10th final decision. A grazing system which enables plants to synthesize and store food for maintaining plant functions, to form vegetative structures for renewal of top growth, to maintain a healthy root system, and to produce viable seed will produce and sustain a healthy riparian system.

The historic grazing use of the Whitehorse Butte Allotment did not follow the plant physiology principle. Too many cattle (1,900 head) grazed the upper elevation pastures during the hot season (June to September) year after year. The range condition from this type of use was unacceptable and had to be improved. The July 1990 decision not only reduced the number of livestock grazing in the upper elevation riparian pastures by 63 percent but also reduced the duration of grazing from 105 days to a maximum of 60 days each year.

Equally significant with the reduction in livestock numbers and grazing period is the change in the *timing* of use in conjunction with *periods of rest*. A change in grazing use from June through September to no more than 60 days from April through mid-July focuses livestock grazing use in the cooler portion of the season. Livestock use of riparian zones is still expected to occur under the revised grazing program; however, the cooler weather, more abundant water and succulent upland herbaceous vegetation will encourage livestock to distribute more evenly into the upland areas, thus substantially reducing the impact to riparian areas.

An important aspect of the July 1990 decision is the amount of rest the upper elevation riparian pastures will receive. During the course of the four-year grazing cycle, each upper elevation riparian pasture will receive 450 days of deferment/rest (which includes two consecutive years of total rest) versus 120 days of grazing.

The amount of deferment/rest and proper timing of grazing use relative to plant physiological needs will result in increased plant production and vigor, increased ground and bank cover, increased shading of streams, moderating of water temperatures (lower summer/warmer winter), improved water quality and fisheries habitat, and increased late season flows. Monitoring will serve to identify and facilitate any adjustments necessary in the future.

RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Range improvements such as stockwater developments and fences were proposed after considering consistency with wilderness study area guidelines, wildlife needs, wild horses and special management areas. These range improvements were determined to be the minimum necessary to successfully implement the proposed grazing system, to properly control livestock movement, and to obtain proper livestock distribution and forage utilization without degrading or compromising the integrity of other natural resources. Many project proposals were eliminated based on this rigorous test.

Undoubtedly, developing range improvements is costly. This is largely due to additional costs to those for materials used, time spent, or vehicles used. The total expenses associated with range improvement development also include costs for survey and design to meet engineering, safety standards and longer life for projects, administrative contract, considerations to assure compliance with resource programs such as wilderness, and cultural and threatened/endangered species clearances required by law. There are also travel costs—an operating cost resulting from the remoteness of southeastern Oregon.

Costs are normally paid by four primary funding sources: (1) direct appropriation from Congress; (2) BLM's range improvement program; (3) County Grazing Board funds; and (4) direct contribution, generally from livestock permittees. The only source which directly affects the taxpayer is direct appropriation from Congress to BLM.

The other three funding sources are derived, directly or indirectly, from livestock permittees grazing livestock on public land. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, FLPMA of 1976, and the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 each legislate that a portion of the grazing fee be returned to the county and/or BLM district from which the fee was paid. These monies are directed for on-the-ground range rehabilitation, protection, and improved forage condition which benefit wildlife, watershed protection, and livestock production. By policy, these monies cannot be spent on maintenance of existing

range improvements but must be spent for construction of new improvements. Funds from the County Grazing Board and direct contributions from livestock permittees are generally directed to specific projects at the discretion of the funding entity.

Current BLM policy requires maintenance of range improvements to be borne by the parties deriving primary benefit from the improvement. Thus, maintenance cost for the 18.5 miles of fencing, 18 miles of pipelines including their associated source structures, and one spring will be borne by the livestock permittee, the Whitehorse Ranch. Maintenance of a two-mile riparian enclosure on Little Whitehorse Creek will be the responsibility of BLM because the benefits of the enclosure will be derived by the fish, wildlife, and watershed resources.

Exclusion of Livestock Grazing

Considering the cost of range improvements and the severity of impacts to riparian zones and fish habitat which have resulted from past grazing management practices, why not eliminate livestock grazing from the Whitehorse Butte Allotment?

One reason for retaining grazing on Whitehorse Butte Allotment is that this allotment presents range management professionals with a complex ecosystem involving many variables including topography, vegetation physiology, animal behavior characteristics, a multitude of native wildlife and plant species, weather and climate, sensitive native fish species, recreation and other human activities, laws, and land use planning guidelines. Each element in the ecosystem affects and influences the others. The adverse range/riparian conditions leading to the BLM's July 1990 decision were not attributed to livestock grazing, but rather to improper livestock management practices. BLM believes that proper livestock grazing practices, appropriately balanced with the other elements of the ecosystem, will achieve management objectives established for the riparian and other natural resources.

Secondly, BLM cannot simply eliminate livestock grazing from the Whitehorse Butte Allotment. The 1984 Southern Malheur Rangeland Program Summary, BLM's primary direction for livestock grazing management in the Jordan Resource Area, identified livestock grazing as an authorized use in the Whitehorse Butte Allotment. This land use plan, developed with substantial public input, identified the Whitehorse Butte Allotment for multiple use and sustained yield management. Elimination of livestock grazing would not be consistent with this land use planning direction nor with the BLM's commitment to manage public lands.

Although total exclusion of livestock grazing from the Whitehorse Butte Allotment is not considered to be consistent with the land use plan, exclusion of livestock grazing from portions of the allotment was seriously considered during the analysis and decisionmaking process. Before making his final decision, Vale BLM District Manager William C. Calkins met with the district's resource staff for assurance that a limited grazing alternative in the upper elevation riparian pastures would achieve the management objectives outlined in the land use plan. Based on their knowledge and experience, BLM resource professionals agreed that well-managed livestock grazing was indeed compatible with the other resource values found within the Whitehorse Butte Allotment.

Conclusion

Maintaining a healthy riparian ecosystem does not require total exclusion, but rather *proper management*

of livestock. A grazing system designed to meet the physiological needs of the vegetation will not only allow livestock and a healthy riparian ecosystem to function together but will also allow for improvement of water quality and reduced erosion, enable additional recreational opportunities, and improve wildlife and fisheries habitat. Proper management requires appropriate and regulated control of livestock through development of range improvements and monitoring implemented over time to ensure objectives are being met.

Success in the Whitehorse Butte Allotment is not only success for the natural resources but also for all people who have been actively involved in this process. People who are willing to share their "visions" and to listen to others. People willing to step forward with innovative ideas, not step back and merely be critical. These people will benefit from knowing the ecosystem is improving and that they are a part of that improvement.



Table 1 - Whitehorse Butte Summary Comparison

Upper Elevation Pastures

Lower Elevation Pastures

Pre-Decision Use	Decision	Pre-Decision Use	Decision
1,900 cattle	700 cattle	1,900 cattle	1,500 cattle
6,650 AUMs	1,400 AUMs	5,700 AUMs	6,900 AUMs
Season Long Grazing 6/15 to 9/30	Rest/Rotation Grazing 4/15 to 7/15 60 days maximum	Season Long Grazing 3/15 to 6/15	Deferred/Rotation Grazing 3/15 to 8/31
Critical growing season use every year	Two years of critical growing season use followed by two years of total rest	Critical growing season use every year	Two years of critical growing season use followed by two years of use either before or after the critical growing season
30 days of regrowth in riparian zones	Two years of 75 days of regrowth annually in riparian zones followed by two years of total rest	Willow Creek Use: 3/15 to 6/15 every year (critical growing season grazing every year)	Willow Creek Use: 3/15 to 4/30 every year (no critical growing season use)
Hot season grazing in riparian and upland zones every year	No hot season grazing in riparian and upland zones	Limited hot season grazing in riparian zones	No hot season grazing in riparian zones

SUMMARY OF WORK

Land Use Planning (LUP) decisions for the Jordan Resource Area are identified in the Preferred Land Use Alternative document for the Southern and Northern Malheur Resource Areas dated March 14, 1983. (The Southern Malheur Resource Area name was changed to Jordan Resource Area on October 1, 1988). As identified in the Land Use Alternative document, there are supplemental land use decisions for the livestock and wilderness programs. These include the Rangeland Program Summary and the Wilderness EIS. To identify all land use planning decisions applicable to the Jordan Resource Area requires review of the 1983 Preferred Land Use Alternative document, the Southern Malheur Rangeland Program Summary dated January 1984, the 1983 Southern Malheur Grazing Management Program Draft EIS, the Final Southern Malheur Grazing Management EIS dated September 1983, and the Oregon Wilderness EIS dated December 1989.

This section will focus on the decisions of above listed documents and identify those actions completed during Fiscal Year 1990 (9/30/89 to 10/1/90) in support of the various planning decisions. Major program initiatives currently identified for Fiscal Year 1991 are also identified.

1990 PROGRAM SUMMARY

Range Management Program

The Jordan Resource Area Preferred Use Alternative commits the BLM to establish forage allocations and to implement range improvements necessary to meet forage allocations and develop Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) in allotments where a need exists to improve unsatisfactory resource conditions or maintain those that are satisfactory. The determinations for improve "I" or maintain "M" allotments are based on the allotment's condition or potential for resource conflict. Currently, there are 8 "I" and 22 "M" allotments in the Jordan Resource Area.

Each of the "I" and "M" allotments was monitored for utilization and actual use. In preparation for multidisciplinary allotment evaluations scheduled for 1991, two "I" and five "M" allotments were additionally monitored for trend and climate.

Multidisciplinary allotment evaluations completed on two "I" and three "M" allotments in 1990 identified some needs. For the two "I" allotments, needed actions included revision of one AMP and development of a

new AMP. In one "M" allotment, additional riparian monitoring is needed. No changes in grazing management were identified for the other two "M" allotments evaluated. No adjustments in forage allocation were necessary for any of the five evaluated allotments.

In 1990, the second of three adjustments in active grazing preference was implemented on one allotment, with the final adjustment to be in 1991. No other adjustments in forage allocation occurred in 1990.

Range improvements included 6 miles of fence, 21.9 miles of pipeline, 1 well, 2 spring developments, and maintenance of 10 miles of enclosures.

During 1990 continuing emphasis was placed on the Trout Creek Mountains Geographic Emphasis Area (GEA). This program was developed to focus management attention and resources to public land areas within Oregon for accomplishment of riparian and multiple use objectives. The Trout Creek Mountains GEA is one of the highest priority range/riparian areas in the state. The area encompasses four allotments including approximately 520,000 acres of public land. All four, which are classified as "I" allotments, are in the planning and coordination stage of development for management plans. The plans are being developed to meet management objectives through the maintenance and improvement of riparian, scenic, recreational, vegetative, and fish and wildlife values. The input methodology for future planning in the Trout Creek Mountains GEA involves an intensive coordination effort with representatives from grazing and environmental interest groups. Further explanation of the Trout Creek effort is provided in this document's feature report section.

Wilderness Program

With the exception of the Owyhee Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA), wilderness recommendations for the Jordan Resource Area were finalized in the Wilderness EIS published in December 1989. The wilderness recommendation for the Owyhee Canyon WSA was made in the Owyhee Canyonlands Final EIS published by the Boise BLM District in September 1989. Based on analysis provided in those documents, 13 WSAs located all or partially in the Jordan Resource Area (totaling 437,585 acres) were recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. This includes all or part of the Sheephead Mountains (OR-2-72C), Wildcat Canyon (OR-2-72D), Alvord Desert (OR-2-74), Owyhee Breaks (OR-3-59), Lower Owyhee Canyon (OR-3-

110), Jordan Craters (OR-3-128), Willow Creek (OR-3-152), Disaster Peak (OR-3-153), Fifteen Mile Canyon (OR-3-156), Oregon Canyon (OR-3-157), Twelve Mile Creek (OR-3-162), Upper West Little Owyhee (OR-3-173), and Owyhee Canyon (OR-3-195) WSAs. In addition, five wilderness study areas (297,490 acres) were recommended as non-suitable. This includes the Saddle Butte (OR-3-111), Bowden Hills (OR-3-118), Palomino Hills (OR-3-114), Clarks Butte (OR-3-120), and Look-out Butte (OR-3-194) WSAs.

Wilderness Study Reports (WSR) have recently been prepared for the above listed WSAs. These reports will be forwarded to the United States Congress, through the Secretary of the Interior and the President, to be utilized during their considerations for wilderness designations. It is important to note that only Congress can formally designate areas as wilderness.

An ongoing effort was placed on interim management of all identified WSAs. This included visits to each WSA at least monthly during the field season to ensure no activities were incurring unacceptable degradation of wilderness values. No violations of Wilderness Interim Management guidelines were identified this fiscal year.

Wildlife Program

Emphasis is placed on vegetation management in the wildlife program since vegetation is critical for all types of wildlife. Game species of special interest in the resource area include deer, antelope, and bighorn sheep. Utilization of vegetation by wildlife is determined annually by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) through browse transects and allotment evaluations which determine proper wildlife levels and/or potential areas of forage conflict. This information is utilized by both BLM and ODFW to develop appropriate utilization levels on preferred forage plants and to allocate forage to wildlife within the various allotments and pastures throughout the spring, summer, fall, and winter ranges of big game.

Riparian habitat improvement and management has received continuing emphasis in the Vale District, including the Jordan Resource Area, since the mid-60s. Special effort has been directed toward the exceptional resource values of the Oregon Canyon and Trout Creek Mountains. Among those values is the Willow-Whitehorse cutthroat trout, a native cutthroat that has suffered poor habitat conditions due to recent drought conditions and a lack of sufficient vegetation along the streams. Fifteen livestock enclosures have been built along portions of Little Whitehorse and Willow Creeks and maintenance of these enclosures occurs annually. In addition, several higher elevation resources provid-

ing important fish habitat are being temporarily rested to allow the uplands and local headwater streams a chance to develop adequate plant cover. Monitoring of the rested area and other areas still utilized by livestock is an important element in the wildlife program. These ongoing studies of vegetation change, which are an important part of riparian habitat management throughout the resource area, utilize traditional monitoring tools as well as Color Infrared Photography analysis.

Recreation Program

Use of the public lands and waterways in the Jordan Resource Area is expanding due to an increasing awareness of the opportunities available for outdoor recreational pursuits.

The Owyhee River floatboating program was limited in fiscal year 1990 primarily because of low water flows. Twenty-three commercial outfitters applied for and received special recreation permits this fiscal year, but because of low water levels only four used the river. Total commercial use for 1990 was 283 user days. Noncommercial use, which does not require a permit, also occurs each year. During 1990 the noncommercial use of Owyhee River totaled approximately 687 user days.

Development of the Rome Owyhee River access point continued with planting of trees and development of a new irrigation system. In addition, personnel were stationed at Rome during the spring and summer season to assist river users and others utilizing the Rome facilities. Use of the access point by both river users and other recreationists continues to increase.

Passage of the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988 designated the West Little Owyhee and the North Fork of the Owyhee River as Wild Rivers, adding 67 miles to the 120 miles of the Owyhee River designated in 1984, resulting in 187 miles of Wild River administered by the Jordan Resource Area. One of the highest priorities in the Recreation program is administration and management of these Wild River systems. The BLM has recently acquired two parcels of land on the Owyhee River near Birch Creek. This acquisition, combined with the addition of the West Little Owyhee and North Fork of the Owyhee Rivers to the Wild River system, have created a need for new management plans for the applicable areas. Work was started on these plans in 1990, with the plans anticipated to be complete in 1992.

Minerals Program

The minerals program remains small and diverse. Resource area personnel processed three Notices of Intent for Mining Exploration and conducted three inspections of existing mining claims. Three Free Use permits were issued for gravel in 1990 to satisfy Malheur County Road District and Irrigation District needs. A number of 5-year Free Use permits, issued in past years by the Vale BLM District, are monitored annually. The resource area has developed and initiated a data base inventory of all mineral material sites which will help facilitate in designing a management plan for the mineral materials program. Currently, the resource area has no mineral leasing activity.

Cultural Resource Program

During 1990, cultural resource inventories were completed for 32 projects located on public lands and involving approximately 500 acres administered by Jordan Resource Area. Several significant historic and prehistoric properties were recorded, including the remains of both a stage station and a Civilian Conservation Corps camp, and two very large prehistoric campsites. None of these sites were adversely affected by construction or management activities. Where conflicts with other resources occurred, mandated consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation was initiated.

Plans to fence the stage station to prevent further deterioration were initiated in 1990. The stage station, located adjacent to a county road, is being considered for interpretative signing in 1991. Other measures to protect known cultural resources include site patrols and monitoring which are expected to be expanded in 1991 with District personnel patrolling selected sites.

Sensitive Plant and Animal Species Program

Field studies have fairly well documented the areas where sensitive plants and animals occur within the Jordan Resource Area. The Area Biologist visits these areas several times yearly to conduct inventory and monitoring studies. Recent work included studies of the unique desert plant *Lepidium dasysii* (Davis' peppergrass) which is a category 2 federal candidate species. (Federal candidate category 2 species are those for which U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs additional information before proposing as endangered or threatened.) These studies on Davis peppergrass involved some excellent cooperative work with the Nyssa High school staff and students. In other sensitive

species research, inventories of the rare kit fox and Townsend's big-eared bat were conducted during the winter of 1989-90.

All proposed land disturbances (e.g., fence construction, pipelines, spring development, reservoir construction, and drilling for wells or mineral exploration) require field inspection prior to their approval to determine if any sensitive/special status species or their habitat occur on the site. If so, the action is modified to avoid disturbing the species or their habitat.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

There are four Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) located in the Jordan Resource Area — Owyhee River, Jordan Craters, Saddle Butte Lava Tubes, and Whitehorse Basin. Each of these ACECS has outstanding importance for one or more resources. For example, the Owyhee River ACEC provides excellent white water rafting and important habitat for a variety of hawks and eagles, while the Whitehorse Basin ACEC includes major streams supporting Willow-Whitehorse cutthroat trout and important habitat for mule deer and bighorn sheep. The ACECs are visited at least once a year to monitor accomplishment of management objectives.

A great deal of attention and effort has gone into the Whitehorse Basin ACEC due to concern for native trout in the involved watersheds (refer to the Trout Creek discussion in the feature report section). Approximately eight miles of Big Whitehorse Creek were excluded from access by cattle two years ago. Vegetative recovery, monitored annually, indicated very impressive willow recovery there in 1990. Work was done on an additional enclosure along that portion of Little Whitehorse Creek within the Whitehorse Seeding.

Research Natural Areas

Jordan Craters lava flow, the only Research Natural Area (RNA) within the Jordan Resource Area, is not only a large area of spectacular scenery but also provides unique research opportunities. For example, two areas of higher ground became islands when the lavas surrounded them roughly three thousand years ago. Never grazed by livestock, these range plant communities serve as "benchmark" sites for ongoing scientific studies.

Several smaller sites are presently being evaluated for eventual inclusion in the Federal RNA system. These include desert lake beds or playas, and a corridor to the south of Jordan Craters to include Clark's Butte and Lava Butte.

Wild Horse Program

During 1990, the four wild horse Herd Management Areas (HMAs) were monitored more frequently than normal because of drought conditions. Condition of the horses and water availability were observed to determine if emergency measures were necessary, and a drought contingency plan was developed to consider options for emergent action. A water source was developed in the Sand Springs HMA, and springs in both the Jackie Butte and Sheepheads HMAs were cleaned to increase water availability.

Census counts were completed on all four HMAs and all herd populations determined to be within the management levels established in the land use plan. No horses were removed from the HMAs in 1990. Vegetative monitoring within the HMAs included actual use and utilization. These studies will be used to determine the progress toward achieving objectives to preserve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance between vegetation, livestock, wild horses and wildlife.

Soils and Watershed Program

Watersheds and their associated soils are vital to all multiple uses of public lands. Drought has weakened the vigor of many rangeland plants and necessitated some change in vegetative use on the part of local ranchers.

Riparian habitat improvement has been, and will likely continue to be, the main thrust of the Soil and Watershed program within the Jordan Resource Area. Considerable thought has gone into designing grazing systems that improve riparian vegetation. Frequently, such systems require construction of new drinking waters for stock away from riparian habitats. Additional fencing is also often necessary to enable seasonal control of livestock.

Land and Rights-of-Way Program

Although no land exchanges were completed in 1990, several are proposed for completion in future years. Two proposed exchanges involve acquisition of private lands within an area under wilderness review in exchange for public lands not under wilderness review. There was one scenic easement acquired in the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River Corridor above Three Forks.

Several other land and rights-of-way actions occurred during the year. A Recreation Public Purpose lease for an existing landfill was renewed, five rights-of-way for utility lines were issued, six agricultural trespasses

were resolved, four short-term agricultural permits were authorized, a private land donation was accepted, and four quarterly compliance checks on existing landfills were completed.

Fire Management

Fire management direction for the Jordan Resource Area is covered by the Vale District Fire Management Activity Plan, which was completed in 1990. Currently under review in the national BLM office in Washington D.C., this document identifies specific fire management strategies for all public lands in the Vale District, including the Jordan Resource Area.

The 1990 fire season affected a minimal amount of public land in the Jordan Resource Area, involving only eight fires and a total of approximately 75 acres.

1991 PROGRAM INITIATIVES

Range Management Program

The range management program will emphasize proactive on-the-ground management in 1991. More emphasis will be placed on periodic allotment review to ensure grazing system compliance, vegetation utilization evaluations to determine proper use levels, and range improvement inspections and repair. Project work will continue in the Trout Creek Mountains GEA with fencing, pipelines, exclosures, and spring development projects anticipated for completion. Seven allotment evaluations will be conducted this winter. Two AMPs will be revised, and one final and two draft AMPs completed.

Field inspections which have identified many problems resulting from the recent drought dictate the need to change grazing management on several allotments. In many pastures, deferment of grazing use will be needed to allow the vegetation to gain vigor; other pastures will require complete rest.

Wilderness Program

In 1991, emphasis will continue with interim management of Wilderness Study Areas. Any potential projects in WSAs will be evaluated to determine consistency with Interim Management Guidelines. Information from all Wilderness Study Reports completed in January 1991 has been forwarded for consideration in the designation process.

Wildlife Program

In 1991 continued emphasis will be placed on riparian management, including maintenance of existing enclosures and trend monitoring. Additionally, the existing dam on Rock Creek Reservoir will be repaired to meet safety standards, once again making the reservoir available for water impoundment and associated wildlife habitat.

Recreation Program

An overall plan for management of the Owyhee, West Little Owyhee, and North Fork of the Owyhee Wild Rivers will be initiated in 1991, to be completed in 1992. Pending its completion, an interim management plan was developed for the recently acquired Birch Creek properties on the Owyhee River. Emphasis will also be placed on signing of public lands and roads providing public land access. These signs will provide boundary identification and information for access and recreational use. Special emphasis will be placed on maintenance of existing recreational facilities.

Minerals Program

During 1991 there will be focus on inventory and standardization of available data for the mineral materials program. In addition, applications for mineral materials associated with maintenance for County and State highways, irrigation districts, and BLM roads will be evaluated.

Additional gold exploration is anticipated, and work will continue with monitoring of existing activities and the review of new proposals.

Cultural Resource Program

In 1991 the cultural resource program's major project will be recording a petroglyph site on the Owyhee River and developing interpretative information for people who stop to view the rock art when they run the river. A continuing high level of support to other programs is anticipated.

Sensitive Plant and Animal Species

Continued emphasis will be placed on cooperative research with the Nyssa High School on the life history of *Lepidium dasysii*, a federal candidate plant species for threatened/endangered listing. In addition, plant inventories will be completed for all proposed development activities.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Regular monitoring of all ACECs will continue to ensure their management is in accord with identified standards.

Research Natural Areas

Monitoring of the plant and wildlife resources associated with the Jordan Craters RNA will continue. Evaluations of the pristine vegetation associated with specific sites in the craters will also continue.

Wild Horse Program

A lack of water in the Coyote Lake HMA in 1990 forced approximately 96 percent of the wild horse herd to leave the unfenced portion of the HMA to seek water along Willow Creek. Because of this situation, an evaluation of the Coyote Lake HMA will be conducted in 1991 to identify reliable water sources for this herd of horses.

Increased monitoring of the herd areas will be emphasized to determine if any adjustments in numbers are necessary for ensuring a thriving ecological balance between multiple use relationships of the area.

Soils and Watershed Program

Approximately 36 miles of stream in the Jordan Resource Area will be aerially photographed utilizing infrared techniques. Such photographs are used to help determine condition and trend of riparian vegetation.

Lands and Rights-of-Way Program

Three land exchanges are proposed for completion in 1991. These include proposals to exchange approximately 5,480 acres of federal lands for nearly 4,178 acres of private lands having riparian, wildlife and wilderness values.

Work will continue in 1991 with right-of-way processing for utility lines, resolution of agricultural trespasses, processing of short-term agricultural permits and authorizations for landfills. Work will be initiated on the processing of protective withdrawals for BLM recreation and administrative sites.



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REGISTER

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that an environmental analysis of the potential effects be completed for any on-the-ground actions before their approval. NEPA also requires such analyses be open to the public.

During FY 1991, the Jordan Resource Area will analyze several on-the-ground actions which may occur in FY 1991 or future years. A register of the environmental

assessments (EAs) anticipated for completion in FY 1991 is provided in Table 1 to facilitate public participation in this analysis process.

To receive any of the listed EAs, please notify the District Planning & Environmental Coordinator in writing at the Vale District Office. To identify the proper EAs, indicate the "Area Register Number" and the "Project Name" when making your request.

Table 1 - United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Jordan Resource Area

Environmental Assessment Register

Area Register Number	Project Name	Proposed Action	Location	Affected Special Area	Est. EA Completion Date	Est. FONSI Decision Date
1	Arock Pasture Extension Fence	Construction of 1.5 miles of barbed wire fence	T.30S.,R.42E Sec. 4 & 9	None	Summer 1991	Summer 1991
2	Basque Pipeline #2	Construction of a new pipeline	T.36S.,T.42E Sec. 25 SE1/4NE1/4	None	Summer 1991	Summer 1991
3	Field Creek Water Gap	Construction of 0.5 miles of fence	T.38S.,R.45E Sec. 15 SE1/4NE1/4	None	Summer 1991	Summer 1991
4	Relocation of Lahontan Cutthroat Trout	Relocation of Lahontan cutthroat trout from Sage Creek into Oregon Canyon	T.38.,R.45E Sec. 2	WSA & T/E Animal Species	Summer 1991	Summer 1991
5	East Cow Creek Holding and Gathering Corral	Construction of a holding and gathering corral	T.5S.,R.46E Sec.23 NW1/4SE1/4	None	Summer 1991	Summer 1991
6	Ten Mile Creek Bighorn Sheep Transplant	Release of bighorn sheep in the Ten Mile Creek area	T.30S.,R.45E T.40.,R.43E	None	Winter 1990	Winter 1990
7	Lequerica Holding Pen	Construction of livestock holding pen	T.32S.,R.45E Sec.16 NE1/4NW1.4	None	Winter 1990	Winter 1990
8	Antelope East Division Fence	Construction of 1 mile of fence	T.30S.,R.45E Sec.14 N1/2S1/2	None	Spring 1991	Spring 1991
9	Owyhee Butte Pipeline Extension	Construction of 2 miles of new pipeline	T.30S.,R.42E Sec. 4,5,8 & 18	None	Spring 1991	Spring 1991
10	Monument Pipeline Spur	Construction of 2 miles of new pipeline	T.31S.,R.45E Sec 34 & 37	None	Summer 1991	Summer 1991

VALE DISTRICT MAILING LIST

Government Printing Office regulations require BLM to periodically verify the accuracy and need for mailing lists. This process reduces mailing address errors and keeps on the list only those individuals and groups actively interested in the Vale BLM District's resource programs and issues.

Address Verification

To verify the accuracy of our mailing list, please print your name and address (legibly) including zip code in the space provided below.

Resource Programs/Issues

The following information categories currently exist on the District's mailing list. Please circle those resource programs/issues for which you would like to receive information. **Your name will be removed from our mailing list if this form is not returned by September 15, 1991.** Should you receive other "Yearly Update" documents from the Vale District, only one mailing list insert needs to be returned.

Cultural - Native American Coordination
Cultural - Oregon Trail
Cultural - General

Environ. Analysis - EA Register (refer to EA Register section of this document.)

Fire - General
Fire - Fire Suppression

Forestry - General
Forestry - Timber Sales

Minerals - WSA Plans of Operation
Minerals - Other Plans of Operation
Minerals - Grassy Mtn. Project*

Noxious Weeds - General

Planning - Resource Management Plans
Planning - Baker Yearly RMP Updates
Planning - Jordan Yearly MFP Updates
Planning - Malheur Yearly MFP Updates

Procurement - Contracting
Procurement - Small Lot Sales

Range Management - General

Recreation - General
Recreation - Off Road Vehicles
Recreation - Scenic Byways

Special Mgmt. Areas - Research Natural Areas, Areas of Environmental Concern, Outstanding Natural Areas

Water Quality - General

Wilderness - General

Wild Horses - General

Wildlife - General

Wild/Scenic River - N. Fork Malheur River
Wild/Scenic River - Grand Ronde River
Wild/Scenic River - Owyhee River
Wild/Scenic River - Powder River
Wild/Scenic River - Wallowa Study River

* If you have previously indicated a desire to receive information on the Grassy Mountain project, your name will remain on that mailing list (even if not circled on this form).

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

**Forwarding and Return Postage
Guaranteed,
Address Correction Requested**



POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF THE INTERIOR
INT 415